

Organization

Any activity that allows students to practice...

writing a lead that hooks the reader
sequencing in a logical & interesting way
identifying the turning point
connecting ideas to a larger theme
linking ideas together for the reader
setting up a problem – then solving it
crafting a conclusion that ties up loose ends

1. I-Search

Students use community-based and personal research to explore a topic of genuine interest. They begin by defining what it is they want to know and why the topic is important to them, and include in their research a description of methods used and what they have learned or gained from the experience. The structure of the research format provides an excellent built-in organizer, yet the task is never dry or dull because the students really care about it! The best resource: *The I-Search Paper* by Ken Macrorie.

2. Out-of Sequence

Try reordering a student paper, poem, magazine article, etc., and then asking students to reassemble it in the correct order. This works particularly well if the article is cut into pieces so students (by themselves, in pairs, or in groups) can play with it like a puzzle, moving pieces around to try different versions. Ask them to find the lead first – then the conclusion. How can they spot these things? What are the clues? How do you spot transitions? As a next step, ask students to select a piece of their own work, cut it into pieces by paragraph and ask someone else to put it back together. Is it easy or hard? Ask, why?